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(**Washington, DC**) Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) questioned military personnel regarding possible under-reporting of sexual assaults during yesterday's hearing of the Oversight and Government Affairs subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs.

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"Sexual assault in the military has been a quiet crisis for far too long," said Congresswoman McCollum. "Congress and the military need good data to track the impact of the Department of Defense's policies."

The military's progress in addressing this crisis is incomplete and scattered. A 2006 Department of Defense survey of active duty personnel indicates 79 percent of women and 78 percent of men who experienced unwanted sexual contact did not report the incident – meaning the military is informed of only about 2 of every 10 violations.

"Our service men and women make an enormous commitment to our country. They must be protected from assault by sexual predators during their service and should expect justice when a crime does occur," McCollum added.

Under-reporting of sexual crimes is a significant problem and is often a sign of other issues. A recent Government Accountability Office report notes that some victims in the military do not report assaults because they fear "that nothing will be done; fear of ostracism, harassment, or

ridicule; and concern that peers would gossip." The hearing sought to ensure that the Department of Defense has adequate policies and oversight mechanisms in place to prevent, treat, and punish sexual assaults.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

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